

## Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 DLOS-09 SS-15 ACDA-12 AGRE-00  
AID-05 CEA-01 CEQ-01 CG-00 CIAE-00 COME-00  
DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-08 EPA-01 SOE-02 DOE-15 FMC-01  
TRSE-00 H-01 INR-10 INT-05 JUSE-00 L-03 NSAE-00  
NSC-05 NSF-01 OES-07 OMB-01 PA-01 PM-05 SP-02  
USIA-06 /143 R

DRAFTED BY EUR/SOV:JLCOLBERT:D/LOS:ABERLIND:PJP

APPROVED BY S/MS:MSHULMAN  
EUR/SOV:WHEDGAR  
EUR/SOV:MGARRISON  
EUR:WLUERS

-----105119 231722Z /40

P 231621Z MAR 78  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY  
USMISSION GENEVA

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GENEVA FOR RICHARDSON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PLOS, UR, US

SUBJECT: NOTE FROM USSR ON CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN

1. ON MARCH 18, SOVIET EMBASSY MINISTER-COUNSELOR BESSMERTNYKH HANDED FOLLOWING NOTE TO AMBASSADOR MARSHALL SHULMAN.

QUOTE: AS IS KNOWN, DIFFICULTIES HAVE ARISEN IN REGARD TO THE QUESTION OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE U.N. CONFERENCE ON THE LAW OF THE SEA, THE SEVENTH SESSION OF WHICH WILL OPEN IN

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GENEVA ON MARCH 28, 1978, DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE PRESENT CHAIRMAN OF THE CONFERENCE, MR. AMERASINGHE (SRI LANKA), WILL GIVE UP HIS DUTIES AS HEAD OF THE SRI LANKA DELEGATION TO THE CONFERENCE ON MARCH 18, 1978.

SHOULD AMERASINGHE BE INCLUDED AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE SRI LANKA DELEGATION TO THE CONFERENCE, THE USSR IS PREPARED TO

SUPPORT A PROPOSAL THAT HE CONTINUE TO OCCUPY THE POST OF CHAIRMAN.

IF, HOWEVER, THE QUESTION OF A NEW CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN ARISES, THE SOVIET SIDE BELIEVES THAT A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ASIAN GROUP SHOULD AGAIN BE ELECTED TO THE POST OF CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN, AND WOULD BE PREPARED TO GIVE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION TO POSSIBLE CANDIDACIES FROM THIS GROUP. SUCH A SOLUTION WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO AVOID DISRUPTING THE ENTIRE STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP AND THE LENGTHY DEBATES THIS WOULD ENTAIL.

IN THE U.N. CIRCLES INVOLVED IN THE CONFERENCE, ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE FOR RESOLVING THE QUESTION OF THE CHAIARMSHIP IS ALSO BEING DISCUSSED AT THIS TIME, NAMELY, NOT TO ELECT A NEW CHAIRMAN, BUT TO INSTRUCT THE CHAIARMEN OF THE PRINCIPAL COMMITTEES AND THE CHAIARMAN OF THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE TO TAKE TURNS SERVING AS CONFERENCE CHAIARMAN; THIS EVIDENTLY WOULD ALSO MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO AVOID LENGTHY DISCUSSIONS AND THE GREAT LOSS OF TIME THIS WOULD INVOLVE. IN THAT CASE, THE SOVIET SIDE BELIEVES THAT A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ASIAN GROUP SHOULD BE ELECTED TO THE POST OF CHAIARMAN OF THE FOURTH COMMITTEE (ON THE SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES), WHICH WILL EVIDENTLY BE CREATED AT THE SEVENTH SESSION.

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WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW THE US SIDE'S VIEW ON WAYS TO RESOLVE THE QUESTION OF THE CHAIARMSHIP OF THE U.N. CONFERENCE ON THE LAW OF THE SEA, INCLUDING RESOLVING IT BY ENTRUSTING THESE FUNCTIONS TO THE COMMITTEE CHAIARMAN. IF THE ASIAN GROUP IS IN FAVOR OF THIS SOLUTION, AND THE OTHER REGIONAL GROUPS DO NOT OBJECT TO IT, THE USSR COULD ALSO SUPPORT IT. END QUOTE.

2. DEPARTMENT ASSUMES THAT AMBASSADOR RICHARDSON IS DISCUSSING THIS QUESTION WITH KOLOSOVSKY IN GENEVA. WE THEREFORE DO NOT INTEND TO MAKE ANY FORMAL RESPONSE TO SOVIET NOTE. VANCE

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** TEXT, LAW OF THE SEA, DIPLOMATIC NOTES, MEETINGS  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
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**Decapton Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decapton Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
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**Document Number:** 1978STATE074997  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** JLCOLBERT:D/LOS:ABERLIND:PJP  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Review Release Event:** n/a  
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**TAGS:** PLOS, UR, US, UN  
**To:** MOSCOW GENEVA  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014